

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Consumer Protection and Safety Division
Railroad Operations and Safety Section

Resolution SX-52
November 21, 2002

RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION SX-52. GRANTS TO SAN DIEGO NORTHERN RAILWAY AT THE FALLBROOK SIDING IN NORTH SAN DIEGO COUNTY VARIANCE FROM REQUIREMENTS OF GENERAL ORDER 26-D, SECTIONS 3.2, 3.8, AND 3.9, AND FROM GENERAL ORDER 118, STANDARD 3, FOR THE INSTALLATION OF SWITCH STANDS AT 6' 0" FROM THE CENTER OF TRACK AND WALKWAYS BEHIND THE STANDS AT 2' 2".

By letter dated August 5, 2002, pursuant to General Order (GO) 26-D, Section 16, North San Diego County Transit District requests an exemption for its San Diego Northern Railway (SDNR) at the Fallbrook Siding to construct four switch stands at less than minimum clearance prescribed in GO 26-D and to provide walkways behind the switch stands at less than minimum dimensions in GO 118.

The affected track is located in North San Diego County between Control Point (CP) Westbrook at Mile Post (MP) 223.6 and CP Eastbrook at MP 225.3, adjacent to Camp Pendleton in the Oceanside area. Planned reconstruction, as contracted by Amtrak and the State of California (Caltrans Rail Division), will upgrade and reclassify an existing siding as "Main Line 1," for up to 40 mph passenger service speeds, for passenger train meets between Amtrak *Surfliners*, SDNR *Coasters*, Southern California Regional Rail Authority *Metrolinks*, and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) freight trains. In addition, the track will be used for the BNSF local to service military shipments at the surrounding Fallbrook Yard. The current main line will be designated "Main Line 2" and permit passenger train speeds up to 90 mph.

Contracted construction work includes replacing rails and ties, providing new wayside signals for Centralized Traffic Control, constructing a new turnout at CP Westbrook, and installing four electric lock switches at the two Yard and two Wye switches. The Yard and Wye switches will be used for BNSF to service the military shipments in and out of the Fallbrook Yard.

GO 26-D, Section 3.2, requires a side clearance of 8'6" for normal switch stands not located between tracks where space is limited. Section 3.8 allows 3'0" for switch boxes, switch – operating mechanisms ... projecting four inches or less above top of rail. Section 3.9 allows 6'0" when between tracks with limited space.

SDNR proposes the use of ergonomically improved hand-throw switch stands to reduce back strain to working trainmen. The u-shaped handles for these switches extend above top of rail 1'9"—in contrast to the previously used Hub 5 devices, in accord with GO 26-D, Section 3.8—and cannot readily be extended out to 8'6" because they must share three head block ties with an electric lock mechanism, used for normal main line movement controlled by a dispatcher—*Centralized Traffic Control*—or to relinquish control from the dispatcher for diverging train movements prior to use of the hand-throw switch. Space is limited because the longest electric lock switch rod that can be used in this application is 11'6". This limits both the possibility of extending the switch side clearance and the walkway behind the switch, with only 2'2" available instead of 3'0" required by GO 118, Standard 3. Space is also limited on the field side by a trackside service road that cannot be relocated.

The alternative to placing the switch mechanisms on the field side is placing them between tracks Main Lines 1 and 2, which would be in technical compliance with GO 26-D, Section 3.9. However, due to potential dangers to trainmen by 90 mph movements along Main Line 2, we believe a safer alternative is the one sought by applicant.

Parties affected by this proposal met on site August 2, 2002—ranking officials from Amtrak, BNSF, SDNR, the State Legislative Director of United Transportation Union (UTU), and California Public Utilities Commission safety staff. All agreed that the sought exemption will provide a safer working environment for railroad crews at these four switch stand locations than alternatives. UTU asked only that this request not represent a precedent for wholesale application elsewhere, as UTU feels that standards in Commission GOs 26-D and 118 are minimum requirements. We will address that concern in the language of the order.

The Commission finds that the sought exemption is safe, reasonable, and should be granted subject to the conditions listed below.

This is an uncontested matter in which the decision grants the relief requested. Accordingly, pursuant to Public Utilities Code Section 311(g)(2), the otherwise applicable 30-day period for public review and comment is being waived.

Therefore, IT IS ORDERED that:

The requested authority is hereby granted subject to the following conditions:

1. SDNR shall issue a notice by Time Table Special Instructions: "Employees are prohibited from getting on and off equipment adjacent to the electric lock switch stands located on Main Line Track 1, between CP Westbrook and CP Eastbrook, at Mile Posts 223.7, 224.2, 224.7, and 225.1 due to close clearance."

2. This exemption applies to the particular circumstances at this location and is not applicable elsewhere and is not to be construed as a precedent that GOs 26-D/118 standards may vary.

This Resolution is effective today.

I certify that this Resolution was adopted by the Public Utilities Commission at its regular meeting on _____. The following Commissioners approved it:

WESLEY M. FRANKLIN
Executive Director